

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 09437 261108Z
ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9437

EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PEPR IS EG
SUBJ: NEW ISRAELI POSITION ON SOVEREIGNTY

REF.: TEL AVIV 9307

1. OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR ISRAELI OFFICIALS IN
LAST TWO DAYS MAKE CLEAR THAT CABINET BELIEVES THE ANNOUNCE-
MENT JULY 24 BY DAYAN IN KNESSET THAT GOI WOULD DISCUSS
ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY IN WEST BANK AND GAZA AFTER FIVE-
YEAR PERIOD, "AND THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A
SOLUTION TO THIS ISSUE," IS SIGNIFICANT STEP IN TRYING
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TO MEET U.S. CONCERNS. DAYAN UNDERSCORED TO ME CABINET
DECISION TO ENDORSE HIS PROPOSED WORDING (REFTEL).
WEIZMAN TOLD ME JULY 25 THAT DAYAN HAD NEARLY COME
AROUND TO THE POSITION WEIZMAN HAD HIMSELF TAKEN DURING
THE CABINET'S EARLIER DEBATES OVER THE TWO U.S. QUESTIONS.
EZZER'S SELF-SATISFACTION ASIDE, DAYAN HAS NOW PARTIALLY
DELIVERED BEGIN WHEN HE WAS UNABLE TO DO SO BEFORE.

2. WE CAN THINK OF SEVERAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS SHIFT. CURIOUSLY BEGIN IS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING HE TOLD A RECENT CABINET SESSION THAT HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN IN FAVOR OF A DISCUSSION ON THE SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION. HOWEVER, HAD HE SAID SO FIVE WEEKS AGO THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A GOVERNMENT CRISIS BECAUSE HE WAS SICK AND DID NOT HAVE THE NECESSARY STRENGTH TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM (*). WE HARDLY KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THAT VERSION. IT HARDLY SQUARES WITH SOMETHING DAYAN TOLD US AT LEEDS: THAT BEGIN HAD MADE CLEAR IN JUNE THAT HE WOULD RESIGN IF THE CABINET ENDORSED WEIZMAN'S MORE FORTHCOMING ANSWER FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, ELIAHU BEN-ELISSAR, EXPLAINED TO POLCOUNS JULY 25 THAT THERE WERE TWO REASONS FOR THE CHANGE: 1) THE U.S. WAS NOT AT THE MOMENT TRYING TO FORCE AN ANSWER OUT OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT, WHICH MADE IT EASIER NOW TO GET CABINET CONSENT; AND 2) NOW THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD PUT FORTH THEIR FORMAL PROPOSAL AND THE ISRAELI AUTONOMY PLAN NO LONGER STOOD ALONE, THE GOI COULD ARGUE TO LIKUD STALWARTS THAT REAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE GOING ON AND NO ISRAELI COMMITMENT WAS BEING MADE PURELY IN THE ABSTRACT. THE NEW POSITION, OF COURSE, ALSO STRENGTHENS COALITION SOLIDARITY. YADIN HAS SAID DAYAN'S LANGUAGE CONSTITUTES A CONSIDERABLE ADVANCE AND WAS CLOSE TO THE WORDING OF THE DMC PROPOSAL TO THE

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GOVERNMENT SOME WEEKS EARLIER.

3. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, WHICH IS NOT NECESSARILY INCONSISTENT WITH THE OTHERS, IS THAT DAYAN FINALLY CONVINCED BEGIN THAT THIS FORMULATION COULD DEFLECT SOME PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD, ESPECIALLY IN THE U.S., AND COST THE GOI NOTHING. THE OFFER IS HEDGED WITH A REQUIREMENT THAT THE ISRAELI AUTONOMY PLAN MUST BE ACCEPTED AND IN PLACE FOR FIVE YEARS BEFORE THE GOI WILL DISCUSS SOVEREIGNTY. ONLY THEN WILL IT "BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THIS ISSUE." BEGIN AND DAYAN MAY BELIEVE THEY WILL NEVER HAVE TO DELIVER.

4. DAYAN MAY HAVE MOUSETRAPPED BEGIN WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI WHEN HE EARLIER GAVE THIS NEW FORMULATION AT LEEDS CASTLE TO SECRETARY VANCE "PURELY AS A PERSONAL VIEW." A RELIABLE SOURCE WHO WAS PRESENT AT LAST SUNDAY'S CABINET MEETING TOLD ME BEGIN MADE A STRONG STATEMENT THERE ABOUT DAYAN'S PENCHANT FOR SPEAKING "ON A PERSONAL BASIS" TO FOREIGN OFFICIALS. HE SAID POINTEDLY THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR AN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER TO SPEAK

WITH FOREIGN LEADERS ON A PERSONAL BASIS, AND MADE CLEAR HE DID NOT WISH DAYAN TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE, SINCE OBVIOUSLY HE COULD NOT REPUDIATE HIS FOREIGN MINISTER AFTER SUCH STATEMENTS ARE MADE. THEN HE QUICKLY ADDED: "BUT OF COURSE I FULLY AGREE WITH WHAT DAYAN HAD SAID TO VANCE; IT REPRESENTS MY VIEWS AS WELL." (*)

5. FINALLY, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BEGIN ASSUMES HE WILL NOT BE AROUND AFTER THE FIVE-YEAR INTERIM PERIOD AND THAT THE SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF HIS SUCCESSOR.

6. WHATEVER THE CORRECT EXPLANATION, THIS CHANGE MAY NOT LOOK LIKE ALL THAT MUCH TO US IN ANY EVENT. YET THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS ASSOCIATES BELIEVE THEY HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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MADE A CONSIDERABLE MOVE TOWARD WASHINGTON WITH THIS LATEST FORMULATION. INDEED, THERE IS SOME SUGGESTION IN THE PRESS THAT THE GOI HOPES FOR A RETURN GESTURE FROM THE U.S. BEGIN IS UNDOUBTEDLY CHAGRINED THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN HAS DECLINED ANY COMMENT ON DAYAN'S KNESSET STATEMENT. LEWIS

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